

YOUTH SERVICES POLICY

Title: Escorted Absence Next Annual Review Date: 01/10/2012	Type: C. Field Operations Sub Type: 4. Juvenile Institutions Number: C.4.7
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References: ACA Standards 4-JCF-2A-05, and 54-JCF-5I-05 (Performance Based Standards for Juvenile Correctional Facilities); YS Policies B.7.2 "Education and Work Experience Incentive Program", C.2.3 "Searches of Youth", C.2.6 "Use of Interventions - Secure Care", C.2.8 "Inmate Visitation - Adult and Juvenile Institutions"	
STATUS: Approved	
Approved By: Mary L. Livers, Deputy Secretary	Date of Approval: 01/10/2011

I. AUTHORITY:

Deputy Secretary of Youth Services (YS) as contained in La. R.S. 36:405. Deviation from this policy must be approved by the Deputy Secretary.

II. PURPOSE:

To establish the Deputy Secretary's policy regarding escorted leave for therapeutic purposes.

III. APPLICABILITY:

Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Chief of Operations, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Facility Directors, Regional Managers, Community Based Secure Detention Facility Directors, and Contractors.

IV. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Deputy Secretary that escorted leave may be approved by the Facility Director, and granted to a youth for a therapeutic purpose, including the opportunity to visit with family before the release date to set realistic goals and expectations; to show youth acceptable and socially appropriate behavior, allow youth to participate in work/training opportunities, and to participate in special events in the community. Family emergency absences are permitted for visits of dying family or attending funerals of family.

V. DEFINITIONS:

Escorted Absence - a temporary absence authorized by the Facility Director, in which a youth is escorted off-campus by qualified personnel for a therapeutic purpose.

Family Emergency Absence - an escorted absence prompted by the death or life-threatening illness or injury of a family member or legal custodian which is beneficial in meeting the needs of the family.

Juvenile Justice Specialists (JJS) – Formerly referred to as custody staff, security staff, Youth Care Officer, and Youth Care Worker.

Qualified Personnel - employees approved by the Director, who have completed safety training provided by OJJ Staff Development personnel, including, at a minimum, State Travel Guidelines, Defensive Driving, Supervision of Juveniles and Safe Crisis Management. An employee who has not completed these classes shall not be allowed to escort youth off campus.

Senior Team - the team of individuals (i.e. Group Leader, Assistant Group Leader, Juvenile Justice Specialist, etc.) assigned to the youth's housing unit.

Therapeutic purposes - educational, recreational, work training, religious, special events, family reintegration or to serve as an incentive. Escorted absences for family reintegration allow a youth to meet with family prior to release, to set goals for return to the community. Educational escorted absences may be used for such activities as school trips or testing. Youth are escorted to participate in sports events at OJJ facilities. Youth attend church services at various churches, sometimes singing in the choir. Work and work training prepare youth for jobs upon release. Escorted absences may also serve as an incentive to encourage good behavior.

VI. FAMILY EMERGENCY ESCORTED ABSENCES:

This type of escorted absence may be granted to a youth by the Facility Director in the event of a death or a life-threatening illness or injury to a family member or legal custodian. The information concerning the emergency must be confirmed by staff. The family emergency escorted absence assists the youth in meeting family needs in times of crisis.

VII. ESCORTED ABSENCE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA; EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA; PROCEDURE:

A. Eligibility Criteria

1. Youth must be on a Minimum or Medium Custody Level.
2. Youth must be participating in all programming (Dorm, School, Counseling, Mental Health, Medical or Specialized Treatment Programs).

B. Exclusionary Criteria

1. Youth must have no Major violations within 30 days of the proposed escorted absence.
2. Youth with two or more runaways/escapes, or one escape within twelve (12) months prior to the proposed escorted absence, shall not be considered.

3. Youth who are considered a high risk to public safety shall be excluded from consideration. All information known about a youth must be taken into consideration when staff members involved in the approval process are making this determination.

C. Exceptions

Maximum Custody Level and High Risk youth who meet the above criteria, except for the custody and risk considerations, may be allowed to participate in an escorted absence for family reintegration purposes if the Escorted Absence Request Form is reviewed and approved by the Senior Team, the youth's Probation and Parole Officer (PPO) and the Director or his/her Designee.

D. Limitations/Sites

1. Family Reintegration visits

- a. Only one youth shall be allowed on an escorted absence to the same site. The only exception is that siblings at the same facility who both meet the criteria for an escorted leave may participate in the leave at the same time.
- b. Escorted absences shall be held at locations such as, but not limited to, restaurants, local parks and churches.
- c. These absences shall be limited to two (2) family members who have been approved by the Director or his/her designee. If more than two family members arrive for the visit, or if one or both relatives have not been previously approved in writing by the Director, the leave shall be terminated and the youth immediately returned to the facility.

2. Group Escorted Absences

Facilities shall be allowed to escort youth in groups to participate in community activities according to the following guidelines:

- a. Group escorted absences shall not be held at shopping malls or other public places where large numbers of people may be present.
- b. If a large venue is selected for the visit, the location's security staff must be informed of the visit two (2) days prior to arrival.
- c. The Director or a high-level administrator shall accompany the group.
- d. There shall be one (1) Juvenile Justice Specialist (JJS) per two (2) youth; and
- e. There shall be a minimum of one (1) Social Service staff per six (6) youth. The JJS and Social Service staff must be qualified.

- f. Escorted absences shall not be held at movie theaters when large crowds are present, but may be permitted when there are a limited number of people present, such as very early in the morning.

E. Staff Ratio Per Youth

Two (2) qualified staff members per one (1) youth, one of whom must be a JJS, shall accompany a youth on an escorted absence. One of the staff members must be of the same gender as the youth.

VIII. PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL and PRE-ESCORTED ABSENCE

A. Initiation of Escorted Absence Process

1. Any staff member may request an escorted absence for a youth by filling out the top portion of the Escorted Absence Request Form [Attachment C.4.7(a)] and taking the request to the youth's Case Manager.
2. The Case Manager shall bring the request to the youth's Group Leader.
3. The Group Leader shall discuss the request with the staff during the Weekly Team Meeting in the housing unit. Staff should discuss any factor relevant to the escorted absence, including but not limited to, the youth's risk to public safety.
4. If the request is approved, the Case Manager shall complete his/her portion of the Escorted Absence Request Form.
5. If the youth is participating in specialized services, the specialized contract treatment provider shall complete the appropriate portion of the request form.
6. The Case Manager shall then bring the form to the appropriate staff members, such as the school principal or Treatment Director.
7. Once the Escorted Absence Request Form is completed and signed, the Case Manager shall bring it to the Director.

B. Director's Approval

The Director or his/her designee shall give final approval/disapproval of an Escorted Absence Request Form after fully considering the information provided by staff.

C. Case Manager Contacts

For escorted absence for the purpose of family reintegration, the youth's Case Manager must contact the involved family members 48 hours prior to the escorted absence to explain the rules and expectations for the visit.

The Case Manager shall notify the PPO at least 24 hours in advance that the youth will be on an escorted absence to allow the PPO's participation.

D. Review by Medical

All youth must be seen by medical personnel before leaving.

IX. PROCEDURES WHILE on ESCORTED ABSENCE:

A. Mechanical Restraints

Staff shall have belts and cuffs with them on any type of escorted absence. Occasions when restraints may be used include, but are not limited to: a youth is found with contraband, engages in self-harming behavior or exhibits other types of behavior problems, attempts to escape, or escapes, and is recaptured, or the visit is unexpectedly terminated. When restraints are used, the procedures as outlined in YS Policy C.2.6 "Use of Interventions - Secure Care" shall be followed.

B. Maintenance of Staff Ratios

Individual escorted absences require a staffing ratio of two (2) qualified staff members per one (1) youth, including at least one of the same gender as the youth. One staff member must be a JJS.

Two (2) qualified staff per one (1) youth, plus a minimum of one (1) Social Service staff per six (6) youth must accompany youth on group escorted absences. At least one staff member of the same gender as the youth must be present.

C. Proximity to Youth

Staff shall be no more than 3 feet away from the youth they are supervising at all times. Staff shall be in the line of sight at all times. Youth shall be escorted and supervised on bathroom visits by a staff member of the same gender.

D. Food

Food consumed during the escorted absence shall be purchased at the time of the visit.

X. PROCEDURES UPON RETURN TO THE FACILITY:

A. Purchased Items; Contraband

Youth shall not be allowed to return to the facility with unauthorized items purchased or given to them during an escorted absence. Staff shall ensure that youth have no contraband or unauthorized items before returning to the facility.

B. Strip Searches

Upon return to the facility, youth shall be strip searched by a staff member of the same gender, with another staff member present for security purposes, in accordance with the guidelines established in YS Policy C.2.3.

C. Review by Medical

All youth must be seen by medical personnel upon return to the facility.

XI. GUIDES LINES FOR SANCTIONS FOR A VIOLATION OF THE ESCORTED ABSENCE POLICY:

A. General

The sanctions listed below are to be used as guidelines to aid facility staff. Each case shall be decided based on its individual facts.

Types of violations:

1. Escape

- a. Code of Conduct violation for escape
- b. Twelve (12) months in YS custody prior to requesting a furlough
- c. Six (6) months prior to approving another escorted absence
- d. Filing of criminal charges for escape and/or related charges

2. Positive Drug Screen

- a. Code of Conduct violation for intoxication and/or contraband
- b. Six (6) months in YS custody prior to requesting a furlough
- c. Three (3) months prior to approving another escorted absence
- d. Individualized Intervention Plan (IIP) shall be modified to include substance abuse treatment

3. Commission of a Crime
 - a. Twelve (12) months in YS custody prior to requesting a furlough
 - b. Nine (9) months prior to approving another escorted absence
 - c. Recommendation for referral to an appropriate treatment program

C. Documentation of violations

1. Documentation of a violation shall be reported on an Unusual Occurrence Report (UOR) and a copy sent to the regional office. If applicable, a Code of Conduct Major Violation Report violation form shall also be completed.
2. Unusual Occurrence Reports shall be written by the employee who discovers the violation, and any other staff witnesses.

Previous Regulation/Policy Number: N/A

Previous Effective Date: N/A

Attachments/References:

C.4.7 (a) Escorted Absence Request Form